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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001051

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TAGS: [KPKO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: BETWEEN DEFIANCE AND COMPLIANCE - THE KHARTOUM  
REGIME'S STRATEGY AFTER UN/AU HYBRID ACCEPTANCE

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Discussions with a wide range of local players and observers reveal a Sudanese regime that is aggressively honing its survival strategy in the wake of its apparently real but very reluctant acceptance of the UN/AU Hybrid Force. Seeking to navigate a "middle path" between outright defiance and abject (in its eyes) compliance to foreign, mostly US-led, interference in its internal affairs, especially Darfur, the regime seeks to take full advantage of policy and practical fissures, both within Sudan and internationally, while giving ground grudgingly while protecting its core interests. Such a nuanced, "passive-aggressive" strategy by the GOS has obvious implications for US policy on Sudan and the engagement of the International Community writ large. End Summary.

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THE WAY OF THE SNAKE  
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12. (C) Recent discussions with international players based in Khartoum, regime critics and supporters, and other observers of the Sudanese political scene have illuminated the GOS's thinking on the current state of play in its often rocky relationship with the international community, and especially the United States. While much of the focus is naturally Darfur-focused, the same GOS world view and "way of maneuvering" applies to its relationship with the SPLM, and with potential internal opponents in the Sudanese North, on issues such as elections, CPA implementation, and economic issues. Based on the regime's decades long experience in its confrontation with the SPLA/SPLM and with other Arab states, the strategy combines duplicity and sincerity and is implemented, as one SPLM Minister noted to CDA, half in admiration and half in exasperation, by "very smart, very hardworking and serious people who know the issues really well and cannot be trusted at all."

13. (C) GOS strategy after its acceptance on June 12 of the UN/AU Hybrid Force for Darfur seeks to minimize its direct confrontation with the United States or the international community, lowering the rhetoric of rejection and rather relying on oblique opposition and indirect obstructionism to maintain its core vital interests: control in Khartoum and the "Arab" North, including Darfur, control over natural resources and other sources of income, and control over political processes leading to the 2009 elections. Preventing the Hybrid is not a goal, preventing the Hybrid

from contributing to those actions the GOS most fears, such as ICC indictment arrests, empowering Northern Islamist rivals, or leading to the breakaway of Darfur as a possible independent state (a concept rarely or never voiced so far, even in Darfur IDP camps), is a regime priority. Issues of concern to the West such as aerial bombing, or human rights abuses or whether IDPs stay or return home are only important to the regime as they affect the "haibat al-dawla" (the awe or fear of the state) of the NCP to rule. In a sense, despite the importance of Darfur, the regime seeks to know whether what we care most about (Darfur's humanitarian crisis) and what the regime cares most about (survival of its hold on power) are in the end two different things or part of the same thing. This is the essence of their ambivalence and their constant maneuvering.

¶4. (C) This strategy is best manifested by a reliance on exploiting readily identifiable fissures existing locally and internationally, manipulating them for the regime's advantage. Such fissures include the gaps and bad blood existing between the UN and AU, both politically and on AMIS, the potentially adversarial relationship between operational international NGOs working in Sudan and advocacy groups working internationally (two regime insiders admitted as much to CDA), using both Darfur non-signatories and signatories against each other and weakening them from within (something that Northern Sudanese did against the South for 50 years), and most importantly, relying on the clumsiness and slowness of the international community in implementing a cumbersome and expensive process we have all arrived at involving the November 2006 Addis Ababa Agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement and the UN/AU "lead" on issues such as mediation with rebel groups and command and control of peacekeepers. One Sudanese cynic noted, to look at in terms of regime compliance or non-compliance with anything is simplistic, "they promote the path of least resistance knowing that the international community will more often than not take it and the regime will keep its options open."

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¶5. (C) The consensus here is that the ruling elite is sincerely interested in a better relationship with the United States, readily acknowledging the US's ability to reward or punish the GOS, but only at the lowest possible cost to the regime in terms of its core interests. It has concluded that the Americans are either mostly hostile or so beholden to a "runaway Darfur lobby" that their ability to improve the relationship is limited. "We don't know whether you could improve the relationship now, even if you wanted to do so," snarled one regime minister.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY  
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¶6. (C) In general, U.S. Sudan policy is well-positioned to blunt Khartoum's maneuver strategy. Maintaining a tough and skeptical public stance almost certainly coupled with a robust sanctions regime (our current policy) is the single essential element to be kept through 2007-2008 Hybrid implementation and the run-up to the 2009 elections and (if one can look that far ahead) probably the 2011 Referendum on Southern Independence. Other elements of a policy to limit Khartoum's ability to maneuver are less apparent. Some of these would be to continue pressure/engagement with UN/AU to fully man and fund their Sudan commitments, from the Special Envoys ("no part-time envoys") to an enhanced JMST, working to improve Hybrid military and logistical capacity by fully manning MILOBS, promoting greater consistency by non-signatories (which is an ongoing effort) and deepening engagement/coordination with key regional players such as India, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Germany in addition to P-3 coordination.

¶7. (C) Still other elements would be, while confronting

Khartoum, encouraging greater direct engagement with the US by (civilian) senior GOS officials whether in the course of regular diplomacy in Khartoum, in Washington visits by GOS officials, and in visits to Khartoum by American officials. Talking more frequently and more deeply (while giving away little or nothing) with the regime is also an important element of a multi-dimensional strategy. We also need to address head-on, the much heard (if disingenuous) regime argument that "no matter what we do you will never be satisfied and never admit to improvement in our behavior." Because the regime is constantly looking for space to manipulate a dynamic process to its advantage, consistent and clear messaging is also essential. Such a sustained, low-key but high-level dialogue would naturally include what we want to see from the regime in terms of concrete action, what we are opposed to (the breakup of the country, the overthrow of the regime, greater instability and war in the region) and very clear, simple benchmarks to measure progress and the joint mechanism to evaluate whether there actually is progress or whether it is the usual reality of projecting the image of forward motion, of acceptance and compliance while emptying it of most substance and meaning.

FERNANDEZ